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VISITATION SERMON,

Preached THURSDAY APRIL 13th, 1780,

At St. MARY'S,

Before the CLERGY of the ARCHDEACONRY of EXETER,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

AND INSCRIBED, BY PERMISSION,

To the LORD BISHOP of EXETER.

By JOHN HAYTER, B. A. K

Late Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, &c.

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VISITATION SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE VISITATION OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF EXETER,

AT ST. MARY'S,

ON THE CLERGY OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF EXETER.



BY GEORGE BISHOP OF EXETER.

WILLIAM HAYTER, R.A.

Printed by W. HAYTER, R.A.

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TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

J O H N,

BY DIVINE PERMISSION,
LORD BISHOP OF EXETER,
THIS DISCOURSE,
IS MOST HUMBLY INSCRIBED,

B Y

HIS LORDSHIP'S MOST DUTIFUL SON AND SERVANT,

JOHN HAYTER.

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

JOHN

BY BENJAMIN R. MILLER

OF THE

THIS DISCOURSE

IS MOST DEEPLY IMPRESSED

WITH THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND ELEVATED

JOHN HAYES

4th Ch. 2d EPISTLE of ST. PAUL to TIM. 2d, 3d, and 4th Verses.

PREACH THE WORD ; BE INSTANT IN SEASON, OUT OF SEASON ;
 REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT WITH ALL LONG-SUFFERING, AND
 DOCTRINE. FOR THE TIME WILL COME, WHEN THEY WILL NOT
 ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE : BUT AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS
 SHALL THEY HEAP TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS, HAVING ITCH-
 ING EARS ; AND THEY SHALL TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM
 THE TRUTH, AND SHALL BE TURNED UNTO FABLES.

THE latter part of this passage has an allusion, which
 is well known to all to whom this Discourse is ad-
 dressed.—The first part of it is directed to the in-
 formation of St. Paul's fellow-labourer in the pastoral office, but
 not taken by me as the ground-work upon which I should at-
 tempt to build any exhortation, any system of precepts, for this
 respectable audience.—It would ill become me, who am so
 much inferior both in experience, conduct, and abilities, to those
 who hear me, to enter upon an undertaking so important, and
 so difficult, as that of chalking out the line of clerical duty, and
 determining with precision the limits of our political and our
 spiritual characters.—Such a rashness would naturally expose
 me to the imputation which was incurred by him, who, in an
 ancient author, is said, without having ever seen a camp, to
 B have

have expatiated on the art of war in the presence of the most eminent General in the age. But his presumption met with its proper reward: for the General, being asked what he thought of the performance which he had just heard, is said to have answered in these emphatical terms: “ * *Multos se deliros senes sæpè vidisse, sed qui magis quam Phormio qui deliraret vidisse neminem.* ”—But I shall, with a seasonable caution, avoid this unhappy display of forward skill; and, admonished by the fate which attended his arrogance, not so much seize an occasion from the former part of my text, of informing you what our lives and doctrines ought to be; not so much enlarge on the explanation or illustration of the “Word,” as the apostle calls it; nor endeavour to elucidate the force of the terms, “in season and out of season;” nor point out the opportunities of reproof and spiritual exhortation; how both these are to be performed consistently with long-suffering and doctrine; but rather gladly apply the Apostle’s words to the defence and commendation of those who have distinguished themselves in these several duties of the ministry.—And it is well for the cause of christianity, that we have had those who could and were inclined to distinguish themselves in the discharge of those duties; that we have had men, whose religious principles have been unshaken by the force and impetuosity of popular plausible argumentation; whose good sense has been proof against the subtleties of sophisticated irreligion; whose genuine knowledge and literature, and accurate digested perusal of the scriptures, have enabled them to explode the hasty conclusions deduced from misquoted or perverted passages of the sacred volume; who have defeated the fond attempts of the pretended philosophy and refined wisdom, or rather foolishness, of modern infidelity; who keeping in view the ultimate design of their high calling, have spared neither exhortation, precept, or censures; who have reclaimed

reclaimed the misguided, won the refractory, and by adding long suffering, and the mild gentle efforts of patient reasoning, to the exertion of their delegated authority, have perfected the work of salvation. It is well for us that the church is adorned with the names of these unsubdued champions; for, as St. Paul predicted, that a time would come, so it has arrived, and has been peculiarly compleated in these later ages, when they will not endure "sound doctrine, but after their own lusts have heaped to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and have turned away their ears from the truth, and have turned unto fables!"—What a motley multitude of disputants and cavillers have been combated by the great asserters of the christian cause! what a Proteus has Irreligion been! It has assumed every disguise of shape, complexion, and dress! If a transient retrospect was allowed me, we might perceive not only how various, but how inconsistent and repugnant with itself is the art of war practised by the tribe of infidels!—One of the first who stepped forth in the cause of infidelity, as its second founder and great protector, was perhaps the wisest in his system! He did not attempt to destroy and annihilate the structure of faith, by the slow process of gradually removing the component parts from its height to its basis, but with the most determined spirit would have sapped the foundation, and having effected that, would have avoided the trouble of pulling down the rest. Every tool, every art of atheism was applied to the execution of this difficult work! but the unsuccessful workman, after the baffled labours of a long life, saw, in his expiring moments, the being of a God, still standing on its broad basis, and rearing its head to the heavens!

One of the next champions changed the mode of proceeding, had recourse to a conduct totally unlike his predecessors! He discarded their principles; not that he submitted to the precepts
of

of sound doctrine: He too had itching ears, and turned unto fable: He permitted the foundation of our faith to remain un-attacked, but by the admirable skill of philosophy, he would have raised on that foundation a new and different superstructure, having first demolished the old! He was desirous of subverting the faith and building his notions under the splendid title of free-thinking, or rather no-thinking, on the ground of natural religion, or the existence of a God! He too, after many fruitless endeavours, seems to have received the conviction of experience, that the edifice was so well adapted, so firmly fixt, so united as it were to the foundation, that they must both stand or be subverted together.—There now advances to our view a bold adventurer in the lists of scepticism, who persisted indeed in the deistical notions of his brother infidels immediately preceding him, but having perceived how imperfect, inchoate, and ineffectual was any kind of force employed against the impregnable fortifications of the *Faith*, entered upon the easier and more expeditious but mysterious powers of “Enchantment,” if I may be granted the use of this word in a discourse of this kind: suddenly all christian institution vanished, every trace of the faith disappeared, and by a surprising operation of necromancy, the whole building was scattered and dispersed into the air, and shewn to be visionary and fabulous: but what was the process? No other than the use of arguments, to prove that the date of our faith ought to be extended, and that it was coeval with the creation!—Besides, their fellow-unbelievers have received some accession of strength, from the engaging denomination they give their books: this plot, though of no deep contrivance, produces very great effects, and may be called, for distinction sake, the art of title-paging.—Thus the very being of a Christian society has been artfully struck at, by asserting the “Rights of the Christian Church,” and a volley of sarcastical eloquence

quence has been discharged at the institutions and ordinances of religion, under "a defence of primitive christianity." The application of prophecies to the Messiah has been plausibly denied by the "literal scheme of prophecy;" the reality of our Savior's miracles allegorized away by discourses upon them; and "a view" of the present controversy between infidels and Apostates! This softening ambiguity has this peculiar advantage attending it, that it sufficiently explains the meaning of the author to others, and yet, when he is too closely pressed, leaves some room for it to be decently explained away by himself.—All these unbelievers have been encountered by those who preached the "word,"—who were instant in season and out of season; who not only performed the duties of their function in exhorting and reproving them, but, like their great example, † freely condescended to speak "as men;" that is, engaged these heroes on their own ground; and, as Entellus to take no advantage of his antagonist, said, "*Erycis tibi terga remitto*,"* they waved the divine authority of their tenets, and defeated their adversaries even in the deductions of philosophical reasoning! This proceeding was necessary, for all had set out with the pompous declaration, that the only motive which engaged them to trouble the world, was a disinterested love of reason and liberty. But in the present time, perhaps the most dangerous mode of attack has been concerted against the interest and profession of our holy religion, and by giving a disadvantageous unfavourable account of the times subsequent to, and the Christians immediately succeeding the apostolic ages, has, in the opinion of many, and perhaps of most of his readers, levelled an indirect blow at the primitive teachers, if not the great founder of the faith. This is a species of hostility, which I may be permitted to call historical insinuation!

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tion!

† St. Paul.

* Virgil, 5th Æn.

tion! He certainly has forsaken the paths of sound doctrine, and turned unto fable, properly so called, if Polytheism be that.

Let any attentive person peruse this part of the Roman historian's works. Let him take an estimate of the praises bestowed on polytheism, and the descriptions in which our religion is exhibited, and the expressions in which these descriptions are couched; allowing those descriptions exist in the authors from whom he quotes them, and let their expressions be as strong as his, such an estimate would leave a considerable balance to the sentiments of the reader in favour of paganism. Such a design as this, I should apprehend, is the most formidable that can be framed against the faith: It is not a design or system of controversy and cavil, started by conjecture, and founded in hypothesis; it is pretended to be formed on the genuine relations, and undeniable record of facts; an enumeration of these facts so disadvantageous to our cause, is what he *politely* calls the disagreeable task of an historian. But let us suppose the domestic case of an English writer, who was tacitly an enemy to the constitution of his country. He cunningly avoids the beaten methods of declaiming against it; he rather prefers conveying his sentiments in the lurking intimations of concealed enmity—which, as it acts imperceptibly, acts more efficaciously.—He proceeds circumspectly enough.—His circumstances are fetched from the narrative of history—so far he adheres to veracity;—but we should find that he borrows from his authorities those passages and articles only which favour his own tenet, and suppresses or ascribes to injudicious zeal those which oppose it: He invariably recounts the considerably beneficial consequences which have flowed from his favourite government, and the many prejudicial effects of that to which he is an enemy. The suspicious reader runs through the whole, mistaking for history what is only party, till upon his after-reflection he discovers

discovers the delusive artifice of his author, and by examination detects him, in a conduct which at first is kept out of sight by the mystery of quotation; the whole dexterity of which consists in confounding the arrangement, mangling the context of his authorities, who being pursued into an enemy's territories, speak a violent distorted language, and, like captives in the hands of pirates, are necessitated to bear arms against their own countrymen! They thus would corrupt the principles of the living, by injuriously misrepresenting the sentiments of the dead. This appears to be the purpose adopted by him, in whose stile his countrymen have admired a talent, nearly chymical, of giving our language these powers, and that spirit, which were almost unknown to it before; whose remarks in the pagan part of his history, would have been, I might say, and ought to have been esteemed invaluable; but whose way of thinking must be arraigned by every serious christian, whether in season or out of season! And we should have a thankful sense of the labours of these, who at this time have attempted, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, to resist the popularity, and retard and check the influence of this historical libel against christianity: These preachers of the word, who with the most laudable zeal, and the efforts of the sincerest faith, have resolutely entered the list with this doughty antagonist, who stands so strongly entrenched behind the fences of great acknowledged abilities, and profound literature!

It cannot fall within the compass of a discourse like this, to take an ample and satisfactory review of the whole controversy, nor would it become me, after more eminent men, to take up the contest, either as meaning to improve any advantage which they have gained, or correct any error into which they may have fallen! For enlarging at all on any part of the subject, I shall apologise, by mentioning the tie which obliges every one of us to be concerned

cerned at least for the cause, and not be liable to the imputation of looking on with an exceptionable indifference, whilst our religion is so daringly though obliquely traduced! But in order to steer in the middle course, so as on the one hand to be clear of that imputation, and on the other to escape the charge of presumption and plagiarisms, I shall leave the ground upon which this engagement has yet been maintained, and endeavour to weaken as far as I can, the strength of our adversary, in the work which he entitles his Vindication.* Here I think the injunction of St. Paul, to be instant in season and out of season, will be of service to us! We may set this against the first striking objection of the author to his opponent. — If, in the incomparably solemn and serious subject of Religion; if, consistently with the spirit of uniform benevolence, which our religion breathes, a smile of some contempt might be allowed, (which in this work, he says, he is inclined to dart at one of his antagonists;) there can be no better object of it than the first circumstance, which the vindication furnishes! I mean, he repeatedly and strongly urges the rules of modern politeness, against the language of some of his antagonists! This seems to intimate, that a man, especially of our order, who has reason to be alarmed, and is, as becomes him, earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints, should be so well bred, as in excess of civility, to compliment away the religion he believes and openly professes; that he should be of so lukewarm a temper, as with the same careless moderation to defend the nearest and highest interest of his life, as he would defend a various reading, or favourite alteration, in the context of some unimportant composition. Not that the asperitas Agrestis, ought to deform any controversial writing, not even the simple page of sound scriptural doctrine: This is not that season and out of season which the Apostle enjoins; but still the voice

* Mr. Davis has replied for himself only—This is meant as a general Reply.

voice of religion will ever be different from the unmeaning softened tone of polite address, as much as the venerable seats of worship are different from the trifling tastelessness of modern architecture. We see a great academical professor extolled by him, for what? Not so much for advancing the plain truths of undisguised pure christianity, but for his good breeding. Happy times, when the same encomiums are bestowed upon an asserter of the faith, which might more suitably be bestowed on the composer of a tale or poem. Unfortunately for the cause, (for any cause will suffer more by a weak defence, than by the most resolute attack) one of his opposers conducted his resistance too hastily, and by not digesting his plan, by not deliberately concerting his measures, by not being well provided with materials, seems in some respects to have given the historian great advantages. Of these the enemy is very sensible; on this antagonist (whose studies we find he calls unfinished in his 92d page, and whose productions are therefore less deserving his notice;) on him falls the chief weight of his reply. What the policy of this conduct is, every impartial judge may determine; but he tells us, that he has no polemical disposition—but that he should lay the advocates for christianity under these apprehensions, which he confesses to have foreseen would be raised in the breasts of those whom in his third page he calls the watchmen of the holy city; that having offered some reprehensible, not only controvertible notions; that, having done this, he should give out that his temper is not inclined to the warm engagements of disputed opinions, is either owning that his notions are undefensible, or he admits the greatest of absurdities; that the injured party is to be excluded from the exertion of self-defence. *Si rixa est, ubi tu pulsas, ego vapulo tantum.* But with regard to the apologist's sentiments of the necessity or expediency of controversy, we are not entirely to rely on him, for he appears

to be self-contradicted; you have already heard, that he expected by his work to give offence to the professors of christianity; this is the same with saying, that he was conscious to himself, that some important interests of the faith had been insulted by him and depreciated; but is it allowable in a christian country, that we should be told, (for he tells us this in his fifth page) that the topic of religious truths, when contested on the stage of altercation, is not interesting to the public? Why not interesting? Because it neither relates to the business, nor the amusement of the present age. What an infatuated presumption ever shews itself in unbelieving writers?—That great employment of life, that anchor of the soul, that hope full of immortality, our holy religion, is sunk into an inferiority to the corrupt or unimportant occupations, to the giddy or trifling amusements of the times! But this impiety is luckily enough self-confuted; for in page 9, with the boldest inconsistency, he tells us, that the public has some interest in the present controversy, to know, whether his history is authentic; now this writer appears to be rather a commentator on history than an historian; opinion, consequently, is the spirit and substance of his composition; hence the author informs us, that we are not all concerned in religious opinions, only in critical and historical, and at one time not concerned in the truth of his opinions, at another time concerned.

It is alledged in the 12th page of this work, that he distinguished the books, the chapters, the sections, the pages, of the authors to which he refers, so accurately, as even to deserve the thanks of gratitude! but in the page immediately subsequent, it is confess'd, that there are *some loose and general* references! We may congratulate the author on this ingenuous conduct of *confessing some!* but whoever will be at the pains to review his quotations, will find, that those on which his most singular ways of thinking

thinking are founded, are the *loosest* and most *inaccurate*. From this circumstance a conclusion might reasonably be drawn, not very consistent with those rules of politeness which he prescribes to us.—He again, prudently enough, acquaints us, p. 99th, that he is a lover of truth, and a friend to civil and ecclesiastical freedom. But here our recollection staggers, and is confounded; for only tracing back its course, it meets, in his 6th page, with the genuine and callous indifference of an unbeliever, which is there expressed by a disregard of the charges of impious principles and criminal intentions; which he calls obsolete:—What is obsolete? I conceive it is that which can be applied to no present use. Impious principles are a charge which may be thought very suitable to many writers of this age, and in that sense can never be called obsolete. If we were to give up the use of these words, I am afraid we should be often at a loss how to express our opinion of principles like those of this Polytheistical annalist. Far ought it to be from me to aspire to any objections to the literary character of him whose reputation is so firmly established; but if I might be allowed to dissent from him in any point of criticism, I should with no great scruple assert, that a passage, which he says (in page 111th) one of the greatest of the fathers must have misrepresented in his adversary, because it is unintelligible, is not so impracticable in construction. The passage is in the eighth book of Origines, (as he accurately quotes it).—Celsus, his adversary, had thrown out as an objection against some Christian author, that he had with the greatest insolence boasted of the chance, which the christians possess, to gain an emperor to their cause;—that then succeeding emperors would follow the example of their predecessor;—hence, that the head of the universe, adopting their notions, would effectually diffuse them through every part of it; as if the Christians had been said to
glory

glory in the thoughts of their religion being propagated more by force and influence, than by the rational means of conviction. But, says Celsus, this, you Christians may boast, if you please; for if many successive emperors should be of your persuasion, yet at last some emperor will return to his reason, (supposing here Paganism to be reason) and will exterminate the faith, which those before him had disseminated: The answer of Origen shews that he understood it in this light, and the words themselves in the original are so obvious, their arrangement is so unembarrass'd, that many might be led to suspect something worse than inattention in the historian.—But this is not all; for again, in the same page, he tells us, that to develop the sense of this passage he “availed himself of the learning of a Spencer.”—But this commentator seems to have seen no difficulty in it, and therefore he has pass'd it over in silence.—How then can he affirm that he has availed himself of this commentator's learning, since he has produced no annotation upon it, and the translation of it is not his own?—Well, therefore, as he acknowledges, might his efforts be unsuccessful in consulting a comment and explanation which do not exist.

The nature of this discourse admits no very minutely prolix examination of several other circumstances, which like those already mentioned, serve to prove that his vindication in a religious sense, is not more acceptable to the world than the work vindicated. I shall only mention the finishing conclusive sentence of the apologist's work; in this he politely gives us to understand, that he dismisses with pleasure this odious controversy; he desires us to forget his defence, when we are convinced of his innocence; a masterly stroke! He intimates in the first place, that the dispute is odious, but from whom did it originate? Who was its invidious author? And he may find upon reflection, that he has no
more

more reason to exult with self-applause in his success, than in himself, having been the odious cause of the controversy. But for the last circumstance, I appeal to the real sentiments of those, who have closely and methodically examined those exceptionable chapters of the Roman Historian, whether they are not persuaded they shall forget the vindication, long before they shall divest themselves of the conviction, which they must have had, that his designs are at least not favourable to our religion, and consequently not innocent. And can you plead your innocence, you who in the chapters which you attempt to defend, have said, that the antient philosophers paid an high regard to the established notions of a religion, which they sincerely believed not to be true; you who mention this with seeming approbation, that the Pagans objected to christianity, because it ran counter to the received opinions, and violated the sacredness of authority. And should not this objection hold good, in regard to you, and your brother unbelievers, who question a religion of so long standing as christianity?

Such in part is this new enemy of our faith!—How much does it concern us then to preach the word, to inculcate nothing but “the wisdom which is truly from above!” If he takes such advantages of those corruptions and abuses which crept into the principles and practice of some first christians, what exhortation to others, what caution and circumspect deportment in ourselves should we apply! lest we give encouragement to those itching ears, who will not bear sound doctrine, but turn unto fable.—Not that it ought to surprise or alarm us, that they whose business it is “to darken the counsels of the Lord by words without knowledge, should be always starting foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they do gender strife.”

But notwithstanding all this opposition of science, falsely so called, the marvellous light of the gospel will, by our united la-

bours, well directed to the good of mankind, shine with so bright a lustre, that, if it be at all hid, it will be hid to them, who are lost!—We, peculiarly of this diocese, have all the advantages that can be derived from the consummate prudence and benevolence, unbounded knowledge, elegant but sound learning, and exemplary piety, of him, who, having gone through several stations of the church with extraordinary reputation, has pass'd on to that in which he presides over us; whose life, as well as abilities, can easily put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

And Thou omnipotent Author of all things, whose providence we gratefully adore, whose Trinity, thy glorious Effluence, we worship with a just mixture of devout admiration; Thou, who sealedst thy new covenant with mankind by the sacrifice of thy Son, who hast often rescued thy word from error, and made it to emerge from the dark abyss of superstition; Thou wilt still forward the zeal of thy faithful servant, in repelling the attacks and eluding the snares with which ungodliness and infidelity without intermission are harrassing and encompassing thy Blessed Faith. These perilous seasons of unbelief are the great schemes of thy over-ruling providence, to prove the native purity and strength of thy revealed will; even as storms and tempests are said to fulfil thy word:—These may assail thy holy religion, but that amidst every assault stands as “mount Sion, which may not be moved at any time.”

Now to God, &c. &c.



ERRATUM. 2d Page, 6th Line, omit the second “*qui*.”



